

# Shamela versus Pamela: Patriarchy Redraws the Picture

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الباحث : صادق رحمة محمد

### Abstract

The present paper aims at presenting a feminist reading of *Shamela*. It specifically seeks to show how the patriarchal mentality behind *Shamela* dismembers all aspects of the positive image of the woman in *Pamela* so that nothing remains in the public mind but the prevalent stereotypical image. The narrative in *Pamela* draws a positive picture of a truly pure, honest, moral woman; the narrative of *Shamela* redraws that picture by positing the stereotypical image of the woman as a lascivious temptress, false creature, immoral person, and shameless prostitute. This image is what patriarchy intends to endure as it has invented it long ago so that it continues to maintain its domination of society.

### ملخص البحث

تهدف الدراسة الحالية تقديم قراءة نسوية لرواية هنري فيلدنج "شامبلا". وهي تنشد بالتحديد لان تكشف بان العقلية البطريركية التي صاغت "شامبلا" تقطع أوصال كل ملامح الصورة الايجابية للمرأة في رواية "بامبلا" لصاموئيل ريتشاردسون كي لا يبقى في ذهن القراء غير الصورة النمطية السائدة. فالسرد في رواية "بامبلا" يرسم صورة ايجابية لامرأة نقية عفيفة و شريفة وذات أخلاق عالية أما السرد في "شامبلا" فيعيد رسم تلك الصورة من خلال تثبيتها للصورة النمطية للمرأة كمغوية شهوانية ومخلوقة زائفة ليس عندها أية أخلاق بل وعاهرة ليس عندها ذرة حياء. هذه الصورة هي ما تحاول النية الذهنية البطريركية تثبيته لأنها خلقتها منذ أمد طويل كي تتمكن من المحافظة على هيمنتها على المجتمع.

## Shamela versus Pamela: Patriarchy Redraws the Picture

### Sadek R. Mohammed PhD

When Samuel Richardson's *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* appeared in November 1740 it was an immediate success. The remarkable reaction from its readers was unimaginable even to its author. Everyone read it; indeed, there was a "Pamela rage, and Pamela motifs appeared on teacups, and fans. Many praised the novel for its liveliness and morality."<sup>1</sup> Richardson's acute contemporary, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, testifies that *Pamela* was "met with very extraordinary ... success. It has been translated into French and Italian; it was all the fashion at Paris and Versailles and is still the joy of the chambermaids of all nations." Then she adds, "it has been translated into more languages than any modern performances I ever heard of."<sup>2</sup> Lady Mary's mention of the 'chambermaids' is very significant as it refers to the "new sympathy on the part of the novelist and the consequent new audience which the modern Novel was to command; literally, all classes and conditions of mankind were to become its patrons."<sup>3</sup> What Richardson did in that novel was to present an image of an ordinary woman unfamiliar in English literature before. *Pamela*, contrary to the prevalent stereotypical image of woman that was deep-seated in the general patriarchal public mentality of the time,

depicted a remarkable image of a virtuous servant girl, who, by her high moral sense, was able to resist the sexual advances of her master and was, ultimately, rewarded by having him marrying her. Furthermore, *Pamela* succeeded and was very popular. Indeed, its success was "largely due to its appeal to the interests of women readers,"<sup>4</sup> as Ian Watt asserts. Hence, the onslaught by the defenders of the dominant patriarchal mentality was vehement. A considerable number of novels that satirized Richardson's highly popular *Pamela* were written in the 1740s. Henry Fielding's *Shamela* was one of the first novels that were written in response to the popular success of *Pamela*. The present paper aims at presenting a feminist reading of *Shamela*. It specifically seeks to show how the patriarchal mentality behind *Shamela* dismembers all aspects of the positive image of the woman in *Pamela* so that nothing remains in the public mind but the prevalent stereotypical image.

Feminism re-examines and re-writes our political and socio-cultural history.<sup>5</sup> It is a "criticism of all patriarchal thought and institutions - not merely those currently seen as reactionary and tyrannical."<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it is a "movement for the full humanity of women."<sup>7</sup> Contemporary feminist criticism dates back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, but its antecedents, of course, date back to much earlier times.<sup>8</sup> The subject of feminism for the women's movement of this period was "women's experience under patriarchy, the long tradition of male rule in society which silenced women's voices, distorted their lives, and treated their concerns as peripheral."<sup>9</sup> Central to all feminist criticism is the concept of patriarchy. A patriarch is the masculine head of a family. Hence, an immediate definition of patriarchy would mean the "rule or government by man, with authority passing through the male line from father to son."<sup>10</sup> This simple definition, however, excludes all the political implications of patriarchy as it is, indeed, a "social system of rule that ensures the dominance of men in the family and state and the subservience of women."<sup>11</sup> This means that the relations between man and woman are not only "personal but also political, and it also means that the relations between the sexes are built on inequality."<sup>12</sup> Western culture and society are "male-centered"<sup>13</sup> as feminist criticism sees them. This entails that "women are made subordinate in every area of life: the family, the state, in law and in religion. In all these areas, women are usually defined only in reference to men, and usually in a negative way."<sup>14</sup> This negative image of women implicitly sees them as lacking "male authority, male power, and, most of all, lacking male sexual organs."<sup>15</sup> In fact, patriarchy is phallogocentric as it "privileges masculine sexuality, especially the male phallus as the symbol of power."<sup>16</sup> However, patriarchy does not only subordinate women but it is also a "social process or conditioning whereby women come to accept in their thinking the idea of male superiority."<sup>17</sup> In other words, patriarchy "constructs stereotypes."<sup>18</sup> It also constructs the "literary canon, the so-called great authors and great books."<sup>19</sup> Consequently, literary criticism "has not only been dominated by male assumptions and ideas but has also chosen to study texts and praise texts that reflect male interest. It has also chosen texts where women are marginal or oppositional and men are central and heroic."<sup>20</sup> That is why, the literature written by men, as feminist criticism has unveiled, "often presents women in simple antithetical terms: as idealized virgin figures and pure, innocent angles or as demonic temptresses, witches, and Eve figures who deceive men."<sup>21</sup>

The patriarchal mentality that motivates Fielding to write *Shamela* is evident right from the title page of the book. He sees how *Pamela* violates the patriarchal canon and projects a positive image of a virtuous woman. Hence, he sets his intentions to 'expose' and 'refute' what he conceives as "the many notorious FALSEHOODS and MISREPRESENTATIONS of a Book called PAMELA."<sup>22</sup> Certainly, he must have realized the "epidemic Phrenzy" (*SHA*, 323) with which the readership has received *Pamela*.

This frenzy is nicely worded in parson Tickletext's letter to Parson Oliver cited at the beginning of *Shamela*:

Herewith I transmit you a Copy of sweet, dear, pretty Pamela, a little Book which this Winter hath produced; of which, I make no Doubt, you have already heard mention from some of your neighbouring Clergy; for we have made it our common Business here, not only to cry it up, but to preach it up likewise: The Pulpit, as well as the Coffee-house, hath resounded with its Praise... I have done nothing but read it to others, and hear others again read it to me ever since it came into my Hands; and I find I am like to do nothing else, for I know not how long yet to come: because if I lay the Book down it comes after me. When it has dwelt all Day long upon the Ear, it takes Possession all Night of the Fancy. It hath Witchcraft in every Page of it.

(*SHA*, 321f)

But what the patriarchal Fielding fears most is the new morality which *Palema* might instill in the public mind: "This Book is the 'SOUL of Religion, Good-Breeding, Discretion, Good-Nature, Wit, Fancy, Fine Thought, and Morality. There is an Ease, a natural Air, a dignified Simplicity, and MEASURED FULLNESS in it, that RESEMBLING LIFE, OUTGLOWS IT." (*SHA*, 321) Therefore, he sees that it is his responsibility to set the story of that "matchless Arts of that young Politician", i.e. Pamela, in a "true and just Light." (*SHA*, 313) It is a rewriting process of an image of a woman that has inverted the balance of power in society. So the agents of patriarchy must set it true by providing what has "passed between her and Parson Arthur Williams; whose character is represented in a manner something different from what bears in PAMELA." (*SHA*, 313) And to give credibility to the new account, Fielding claims that its entirety "being exact Copies of authentick Papers delivered to the editor." (*SHA*, 313) The public mind sees that Pamela's virtues should be the model for all the other women: "This being the only Education we intend henceforth to give our Daughters" (*SHA*, 322). But patriarchy sees that the book is not fit to be delivered into the hands of any daughter or any servant maid. Indeed, it sees it as nothing but evil that the public must refrain from getting influenced by:

But, my friend, the whole Narrative is such a Misrepresentation of Facts, such a Perversion of Truth, as you will, I am perswaded, agree, as soon as you have perused the Papers I now inclose to to you, that I hope you or some other well-disposed Person, will communicate these Papers to the Publick, that this little Jade may not impose on the World, as she hath on her Master.

(*SHA*, 325)

The rewriting process begins by changing the name as Pamela's name is associated with virtue in the public mind: "the True name of this Wench was SHAMELA, and not Pamela" (*SHA*, 325). The tag name she is given invokes shame this time instead of virtue. Then she is given a dubious, low origin. Indeed, the text does not refrain from insinuating that Shamela is bastard:

Her father had in his Youth the Misfortune to appear in no good Light at the *Old-Baily*; he afterwards served in the Capacity of a Drummer in one of the *Scotch* Regiments in the *Dutch* Service; where being drummed out, he came over to *England*, and turned Informer against several Persons on the late Gin-Act; and becoming acquainted with an Hostler at an Inn, where a *Scotch* Gentleman's Horse stood, he hath at last by his Interest obtain'd a pretty snug Place in the *Custom-house*. Her mother sold Oranges in the Play-House; and whether she was married to her father or no, I never could learn.

(*SHA*, 325)

But before that the patriarchal mentality behind the text does not forget to emasculate Shamela by denying her the ability to write as what distinguishes Pamela is certainly her possession of the pen, and, hence, her ability to express herself directly in the text: "for though we do not imagine her the Author of the Narrative itself, yet we must suppose the Instructions were given by her, as well as the Reward, to the Composer." (*SHA*, 324) The pen, here, is certainly the phallic symbol of power which Shamela must be deprived of and which patriarchy fears most in this power struggle. Pamela has achieved a breakthrough by her mastery of the pen (phallus) and this will certainly affect the balance of power and sexual struggle in society. Therefore, patriarchy must set that balance right again in *Shamela* otherwise the masculine domination of society will be forever affected:

The Instruction which it conveys to Servant-Maids, is, I think, very plainly this, To look out for their Masters as sharp as they can. The Consequences of which will be, besides Neglect of their Business, and the using all manner of Means to come at Ornaments of their Persons, that if the Master is not a Fool, they will be debauched by him; and if he is a Fool, they will marry him. Neither of which, I apprehend, my good Friend, we desire should be the Case of our Sons.

(*SHA*, 324)

The epistolary narrative, thereafter, begins to reinvent another image of Pamela by replacing the positive one with its absolute opposite. The aim, of course, is to dispel all aspects of the new, positive one, which *Pamela* has created in the public mind, and replace it by the stereotypical image that patriarchy had created long before that.

#### 1. Lascivious not Virtuous

If Pamela is conceived as a virtuous maid by the public mind, Fielding goes out of his way to portray Shamela as a lascivious temptress who has nothing in mind but trying to intrigue her master into marriage: "I thought once of making a little Fortune by my Person. I now intend to make a great one by my Vartue." (*SHA*, 342). He envisions all that have gone between her and her master as nothing but a grand plan designed by her to make him yield into marriage. She has not been a virtuous maid defending her virtue but a temptress who knows how to entrap her victim:

the young Squire hath been here, and as sure as a Gun he hath taken a Fancy to me; ....and then he took me by my Hand, and I pretended to be shy: Laud, says I, Sir, I hope you don't intend to be to be rude; no, says he, my Dear, and then he kissed me, 'till he took my Breath-and I pretended to be Angry, and to get away, and then he kissed me again, and breathed very short, and looked very silly; and by Ill-Luck Mrs. Jervis came in, and had to have spoiled Sport.-*How troublesome is such Interruption*

(SHA, 326)

She has not been defending herself but she has been capably seducing him as men are 'innocent fools' who can easily be manipulated by women, as Fielding intends to show them. Indeed, all of the master's attempts to rape her are not blamed at all. The master, even when he commits a mistake, is forgiven. All the blame is cast on Shamela alone:

he caught me in his Arms, and kissed me till he made my Face all over Fire. Now this served purely you know, to put upon the Fool for Anger. O! What precious Fools Men are! And so I flung from him in a mighty Rage, and pretended as how I would go out at the Door; but when I came to the End of the Room, I stood still, and my Master cryed out, Hussy, Slut, Saucebox, Boldface, come hither- Yes to be sure, says I; why don't you come, says he; what should I come for, says I; if you don't come to me, I'll come to you, says he; I shan't come to you, says I. Upon which he run up, caught me in his Arms, and flung me upon a Chair, and began to offer to touch my Under-Petticoat. Sir, says I, you had better not offer to be rude; well, says he, no more I won't then; and away he went out of the Room. I was so mad to be sure I could cry'd. *O what a prodigious Vexation it is to a Woman to be made a Fool of.*

(SHA, 328f)

Shamela's behaviour is envisioned as a typical behaviour of a temptress who uses her body to get money. She has inflamed her master's passion by giving him liberty with herself so that she can get material gains from him:

And so, Mrs. Jervis, says I, you would have me yield my self to him, would you; you would have me be a second Time a Fool for nothing. Thank you for that, Mrs. Jervis. For nothing! Marry forbid, says she, you know he hath large Sums of Money, besides abundance of Fine Things; and do you think, when you have inflamed him, by giving his Hand a Liberty, with that charming Person; and that you know he may easily think he obtains against your Will, he will not give anything to come at all- . This will not do, Mrs. Jervis, answered I. I have heard my Mamma say, Fellows have often taken away in the /morning, what they gave over Night.

(SHA, 329f)

## 2. Evil not Good

Shamela is also envisioned as an evil person. Throughout the narrative, she is portrayed to be dishonest in everything she does. She designed her plan to marry her master not because she desires to lead an honorable family life, but to win materially: "I shall be Mrs. Booby, and be Mistress of a great Estate, and have a dozen Coaches and Six, and a fine House at London, and another at Bath, and Servants, and Jewels, and Plate, and go the Plays, and Opera's and Court; and do what I will and spend what I will." (**SHA**, 337). Indeed, she has neither feeling nor even respect for Master Booby: "I shall never care a Farthing for my Husband. No, I hate and despise him for all Things." (**SHA**, 337) Hence, even when her goal is achieved she indulges in an extra marital relationship with Parson Williams:

Therefore, says he, my Dear you have two Husbands, one the Object of your Love, and to satisfy your Desire; the other the Object of your Necessity, and to furnish you with those other Conveniences. (I am sure I remember every Word, for he repeated it three Times; O he is very good whenever I desire him to repeat a thing to me three Times he always doth it!)  
(**SHA**, 351)

All she cares about is to make a fool of her husband after she has allured him to marry her; "O how foolish it is in a Woman, who hath once got the Reins into her Hand, ever to quit them again." (**SHA**, 352)

## 3. Fake not Innocent

**Pamela** has delineated an image of a virtuous, innocent woman who tries her utmost best to protect her innocence from the attacks of a reckless master. Therefore, Shamela is made to delineate an image of an absolutely fake woman. From the beginning of the narrative, when she finds out that her master has "taken a Fancy" on her (**SHA**, 326), she begins to play a game of pretences that spans almost all over the narrative: "you have a very difficult Part to act" (**SHA**, 327). In numerous occasions Shamela is made to pretend not to show her true mind:

1. I pretended to be shy (**SHA**, 326)
2. I pretended to be angry (**SHA**, 326)
3. [I] pretended as how I would go out at the Door...(**SHA**, 329)
4. I counterfeit a Swoon. (**SHA**, 330)
5. *O what a Difficulty it is to keep one's countenance, when a violent Laugh desires to burst.* (**SHA**, 330)
6. Well, says Mrs. Jervis, I never saw any thing better acted than your Part. (**SHA**, 331)
7. I pretended not to know what he meant. (**SHA**, 340)

8. In my last left off at our sitting down to Supper on our Wedding Night, where I behaved with as much Bashfulness as the purest Virgin in the World could have done. The most difficult Task for me was to blush; however, by holding my Breath, squeezing my Cheeks with my Handkerchief, I did pretty well. (**SHA**, 347)

9. I acted my Part in such a manner, that no Bridegroom was ever better satisfied with his Bride's Virginity. (**SHA**, 347)

10. I burst into Tears, and pretended to fall into a Fit. (**SHA**, 348)

Nothing is shown to be true in Shamela's life. She is shown to be all lies and falsehood.

#### 4. Prostitute not Pure

Furthermore, even when her grand plan succeeds in entrapping the master into marriage, she does not lead an honourable life of a respectable wife. Indeed, she feels no guilt to resume another relationship with another man even at her wedding night:

My Husband was extremely eager and impatient to have supper removed, after which he gave me leave to retire into my Closet for a Quarter of an Hour, which was very agreeable to me; for I employed that time in writing to Mr. Williams.

(**SHA**, 347)

She does not hesitate to confess that her husband is fond of her, but she is fond of another man: "We ate a very hearty Dinner, and about eight in the Evening went to Bed again. He is prodigiously fond of me; but I don't like him half so well as my dear Williams." (**SHA**, 348). She uses every chance to seek pleasure with her lover even when they are in her husband's company: "observing my Husband looking another way, I gave him a charming Kiss, and then he asked me Questions concerning my Wedding-night" (**SHA**, 351). She is shown to have no goal but to make a fool of her husband: "We make a charming Fool of him, i'fackins; Times are finely altered, I have entirely got the better of him, and am resolved never to give him his Humour."(**SHA**, 352). Indeed, Fielding's intention is to reinforce the image of the prostitute not the pure woman in the public mind. Hence, he exploits an arsenal of obscene words, especially the word 'hussy', to refer to Shamela:

1. Hussy, Slut, Saucebox, Boldface (**SHA**, 329)
2. Hussy, Gipsie, Hypocrite,, Saucebox, Boldface (**SHA**, 339)
3. Hussy (**SHA**, 340)
4. Hussy (**SHA**, 341)
5. Hussy (**SHA**, 343)
6. little Hussy (**SHA**, 357)

It is amazing that such obscenities are incomparably used in a novel the size of **Shamela**. However, one should not be amazed as the goal of the patriarchal mentality behind the text is to uproot any trace of purity associated with Pamela in the public mind and reestablish the shameful, stereotypical image through its portrayal of Shamela.

5. Victimizer not Victim

The narrative of *Shamela* portrays an image of an evil woman who has been able to seduce a man and control him completely. Man in this sense is seen as a victim regardless of all his attempts to rape the woman. He has been victimized because he falls prey to her power and she is capable of imposing on him an image that is entirely false. As a result he has been cuckolded, deceived, stolen and completely lost his ability to conceive what has happened to him:

The strangest Fancy hath enter'd into my Booby's Head that can be imagined. He is resolved to have a Book made about him and me; he proposed it to Mr. Williams, and offered him a Reward for his Pains; but he says he never writ any thing of that kind, but will recommend my Husband, when he comes to Town, to a Parson *who does that Sort of Business for Folks*, one who can make my Husband, and me, and Parson Williams, to be all great People; for he *can make black white*, it seems.  
(*SHA*, 354)

But if the man has become a victim of the evil of that woman, the public mind must not be poisoned by such 'falsehoods' and 'misrepresentations'. Hence, Fielding conceives his narrative to be: "an Antidote to this Poison." (*SHA*, 356).

Evidently, the narrative redraws the picture of Pamela by positing the stereotypical image of the woman as a lascivious temptress, false creature, immoral person, and shameless prostitute. This image is what patriarchy intends to endure as it has invented it long ago so that it continues to maintain its domination of the public creative space. The Pamela image is a nightmare for patriarchy. Hence, it must be totally eradicated. Interestingly, the final word of the narrative about Pamela is that she has been exposed: "Since I writ, I have a certain Account, that Mr. Booby hath caught his Wife in bed with Williams; hath turned her off, and is prosecuting him in the spiritual Court" (*SHA*, 357). This final stroke is intended to make the eradication of the Pamela image complete.

### Notes

1. Margaret A. Doody, "Introduction", Samuel Richardson, *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded* (New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1984), 7.
2. Richard Burton, *Masters of the English Novel: A Study Of Principles And Personalities*. E-book at [www.gutenberg.net](http://www.gutenberg.net) Release Date: June 25, 2004 [E-Book #12736].
3. Ibid.
4. Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Middlesex, Penguin Books Ltd. 1979), 170f.
5. Patricia Stubbs, *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1981), ix.



6. Cited in Nancy Reeves, *Womankind beyond the Stereotypes* (New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1982),149.
7. Deborah Cameron, *Feminism & Linguistic Theory* (New York: Palgrave, 1992), 4.
8. Julie Rivkin & Michael Ryan, "Introduction: 'Feminist Paradigms'" in Julie Rivkin & Michael Ryan (Eds.), *Literary Theory: an Anthology* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2000), 527.
9. *ibid*, 527.
10. John Peck & Martin Coyle, *Literary Terms and Criticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 166.
11. *ibid*, 166.
12. *ibid*, 166.
13. *ibid*, 167.
14. *ibid*
15. *ibid*
16. *ibid*
17. *ibid*
18. *ibid*
19. *ibid*, 167.
20. *ibid*, 167.
21. *ibid*, 167f.
22. Henry Fielding, *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews and his friend Mr. Abram Adams AND An Apology for the life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 313. *[All subsequent quotations are from this edition of the text and will be duly documented within the body of writing]*

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